

MUSIC THEATRE PROJECT

OEDIPUS - AKHENATEN

CONCEPT AND REALIZATION
KA - Cornelia Müller



Pharaoh Akhenaten, Pharaoh Nefertiti with children
Aten is depicted in form of the solar disk, whose rays are giving life (ca. 1350 BC)

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OEDIPUS - AKHENATEN

The Russian doctor, psychoanalyst, philosopher, archaeologist and astronomer Dr. Immanuel Velikovsky wondered what the character of the Sphinx had to do with a Greek story. After thorough research in Egyptian archaeology, he came to the conclusion that Pharaoh Akhenaten is the historic basis for the tragedy *King Oedipus* of Greek mythology.

King Oedipus and *Pharaoh Akhenaten* are two theatre pieces based on this historical analogy, and they tell similar stories in different ways. For Oedipus it is the classical triangular relationship -- father/mother/son; for Akhenaten it is mother/son/wife. Each of these triads will be represented by a single actor (Oedipus) or actress (Akhenaten), who will incorporate all the monologues of the different roles using different techniques such as acrobatics, costumes and masks. Both pieces are staged inside a twin-spiraled labyrinth of mirrors, preferably in a forest or, if performed in an urban setting, with an installation made of bamboo. One path goes from the outside to the center and another leads outside again. The manifold reflections create a surreal world. The person in the mirror is fiction and reality, ageless and at the same time very present in the real world.

Both pieces will be performed in German, with Italian or English subtitles.

King Oedipus tells the story of a violent father meeting his own death in a way that he had envisaged for his son. His paranoia is induced by the words of the Oracle but soon becomes reality, with his son as his angel of death. The long-awaited symbiotic mother-son relationship now turns real.

Pharaoh Akhenaten is inspired by the idea of a unique god of love and light: Aten. The Pharaoh is the son of Aten who is represented by the solar disk and understood as a principle of life. He abandons all forms of violence: no war, no death penalty, no sacrifice of animals or humans. He reigns side by side with his mother, Pharaoh Tiye, and his wise and beautiful wife, Pharaoh Nefertiti.

In both pieces the *Choir* plays the role of the commentator, interpreting the events musically. The Choir will be formed by THE SUN RA ARKESTRA under the direction of MARSHALL ALLEN. The orchestra comprises ca. 25 musicians and dancers, including strings, harp and kora. Music and dance will pick up and transform the staged events. The spoken parts are musically accompanied in order to create the wholeness of the performance.

There are evident parallels between Sun Ra himself and Akhenaten. Sun Ra is a poet, musician, composer and Egyptologist. Many of his compositions are based on ideas from ancient Egypt. In the movie *Space is the Place*, he wears the Egyptian double-feather crown. He sees himself as part of the Angel Race, born on planet Saturn. The multi-instrumentalist Marshall Allen joined the Sun Ra Arkestra in 1958, and after John Gilmore left our earthly realms, became the leader of the group. He carries forward the music of Sun Ra, one of the most prominent musicians of the 20th century.



Oedipus and the Sphinx of Thebes. Red figure Kylix. Cup of Douris. 5. BC.

KING OEDIPUS

An Oracle warned his parents: Oedipus will kill his father, marry his mother and beget children with her. When he was born, his father, King Laios from Thebes, ordered that he should be abandoned to be eaten by wild animals and that his feet should be pierced, from which the name Oedipus ("swollen foot") is derived. The shepherd who was assigned to do the job commiserated with the boy and gave him to the childless Corinthian royal couple Polybos and Merope. They fostered him and bestowed upon him all the kindness and attention they had to give.

As a young man Oedipus heard about the Oracle and was so terrified that he immediately left his parental home in Corinth to avoid the curse. On his long journey he finally happened to come across his natural father with an entourage. But he did not recognize the man, nor did King Laios recognize his son. As the passage was very narrow with steep cliffs on one side and a staggering abyss on the other, one of the two travelers had to step back to make way for the other. This led to a quarrel and finally to hand-to-hand fighting in the course of which the King's horse shied, reared up and barged into the abyss. Facing his death, King Laios must have recognized his son as the fulfiller of the Oracle's prophecy and the unknowing avenger of his father's abandonment.

Later Oedipus came to the town of Thebes, which was besieged by a Sphinx who devoured everyone that was unable to solve her riddle:

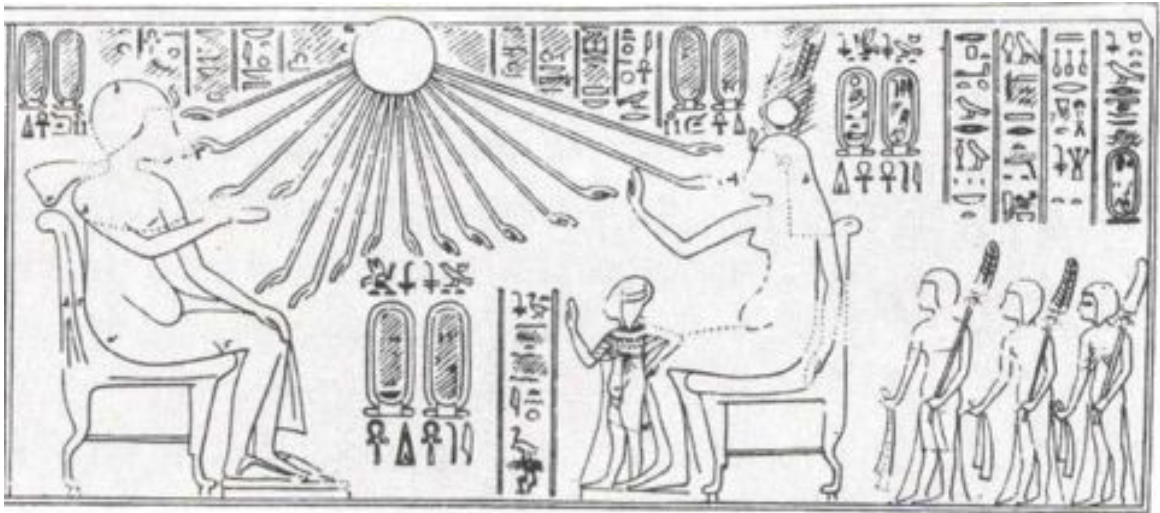
In the morning it has four feet, at noon it has two feet, in the evening it has three feet. Among all the creatures it is the only one to change its number of feet, but just when that number is highest, its power is the weakest.¹

Oedipus recognized himself in the riddle, solved it and caused the Sphinx to give up her siege. People praised him as he marched into the city, and he was declared the new King. He married the Queen, his own natural mother. Thus did the Oracle's prediction come true.

With his biological mother Jocasta, Oedipus conceived two daughters, Antigone and Ismene, and two sons, Eteokles and Polyneikes. An outbreak of the plague claimed many lives and it was said that the murderer of the King was living among them without being punished and that arresting him would end the plague. Oedipus made it his mission to find out who was responsible for the death of the King and in the end he discovered the bitter truth: that he himself was the murderer.

In deep despair Oedipus blinded himself and spent many years roaming foreign countries, accompanied by his daughter Antigone. His two sons became victims of their uncle Kreon's intrigues and killed each other in a fight for the throne. One of them was buried in a grandiose funeral while the other was left to decompose without a grave. But Antigone buried him despite the threat of risking her life. She was caught, buried alive and died in her dark oubliette.

¹ http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Das_Rätsel_der_Sphinx



Akhenaten, his mother Tiye and their daughter Beketaten (tomb of Huya, Tel el-Amarna, 14 BC)



Akhenaten, behind him Nefertiti with children facing mother Tiye and their daughter Beketaten (tomb of Huya, Tel el-Amarna, 14 BC)



Akhenaten, his mother Tiye, behind her Beketaten (tomb of Huya, Tel el-Amarna, 14 BC)

PHARAOH AKHENATEN²

Akhenaten (Amenhotep IV³), Pharaoh of the 18th dynasty (reigning from 1353 to 1336 or 1351 to 1334 BC), was also raised far away from his birthplace in Mittani (today Syria / northern Iran), in the palace of members of his family. As a young man he returned to his homeland of Thebes, in Egypt, after his father Amenhotep III⁴ passed away.

At that time his mother Tiye reigned over both Upper and Lower Egypt. She wore the double-feather crown, made from the horn of a cow with two majestic feathers and a solar disk. From their widely acknowledged incestuous union a daughter, Beketaten, was born. In Persia, incest between mother and son, father and daughter, or brother and sister was regarded as *xvaetvadatha* or *xvetokdas*, which means a holy union – probably this was the same in Egypt (though not in Greece). Akhenaten also married Nefertiti and fathered four or six children with her. She is depicted wearing her own blue crown with the snake Uraeus and also with the double-feather crown. Akhenaten also married Kiya and had children with her.

Akhenaten had a pendulous physique, with an overhanging belly and notably thick thighs, whereas the rest of his body was quite slight and delicate. He probably suffered from lipodystrophy. This is a condition that results in an unusual distribution of body fat. Some of the sculptures of Akhenaten show these traits quite clearly. The deformation of his lower limbs is echoed by the Oedipus myth: the name Oedipus is derived from a Greek phrase meaning "swollen foot."

Amenhotep IV gave himself the name Akhenaten because he was convinced he was the son of Aten rather than of his earthly father, Amenhotep III. His name can be literally translated as "son of the Aten," the sun god, who is depicted as a solar disk with rays ending in little hands that hold the Ankh⁵, sign of life. Akhenaten was the first to introduce monotheism, replacing the previous gods with Aten. His religious reforms were inspired by ethical views of love and non-violence.

Akhenaten was an idealist and extraordinarily inspiring personality, full of love, kindness and a strong sense of family. He was very much interested in the arts and laid out the city of Akhetaten (Tel el-Amarna); located on the east bank of the Nile, it was erected in just a few years. There you can find depictions (paintings, sculptures and reliefs) that show Akhenaten and his family in a very lively, almost cartoon-like design, in strong contrast to earlier, typecast styles of Egyptian art.

Akhenaten had a remarkably strong affinity for nature and its creatures. He wrote poems, such as *The Great Hymn to the Aten* (see below), which shows a deep spirituality and devotion to life as Aten has created it. He did not hunt, led no wars, nor did he allow executions or other human sacrifices -- practices that were commonly accepted before his reign. He gave himself the title, "he who loves the truth."

² Immanuel Velikovsky: „Oedipus and Akhnaton, Myth and History“, Sidgwick and Jackson Limited London, 1960.

³ Greek: Amenophis IV

⁴ Greek: Amenophis III

⁵ The symbol of the Ankh (life) is similar to the symbol for women.

STAGING – CONCEPT

These two pieces refer to each other and will be staged on two subsequent days. The scene is a flat place in the forest. Between the trees and branches are long strips of reflecting foil. These strips form a double spiral that reflects the movement of the dramaturgy: from outside to inside and back outside again. Everyone involved -- actors, orchestra, audience, trees -- find themselves inside a spiraled maze of mirrors, which duplicates and reflects reality to create a confusing and disorienting environment. A soliloquy becomes a dialog with a fictional partner whose meaning might be identified in the projections, even if it ends up being nothing more than one's own self.



double spiral

1 OEDIPUS

The dynamic father-mother-son triad is performed by a single actor in three monologues / roles. The different roles can be distinguished by the use of different costumes, masks and, of course, character.

LAIOS, THE FATHER, is a tyrant, who is constantly engaged in warfare and loves hunting; he kills anything that moves. He fears and feels jealous of his son, who is destined to replace him and cohabit with his wife (Oedipus' mother). At the moment of his death he recognizes his son and understands how cruel he was acting. Thus he appears in the play as a dying man.

JOKASTA, The MOTHER, is trapped between her love for her husband and her child. She switches sides several times but in the end fails to protect her newborn, which is taken away from her. Instead she gives up and accepts a destiny that she did not choose. She deplores the fate of her son, assumed dead, and realizes the damage inflicted on her soul due to her complicity in his death.

OEDIPUS, THE SON, does not know that his foster parents are not related to him. His character is peaceful and he tries to avoid the Oracle's prophecy by leaving the territory where his assumed parents live. He tries to avoid what is unavoidable. Both men are responsible for the father's death. Laios' crime of abandoning his son has inevitably boomeranged.

THE CHOIR, played by the SUN RA ARKESTRA under the direction of MARSHALL ALLEN, comments on all these events by means of music and dance. Comprised of more than 20 musicians, including strings, harp and kora, the jazz ensemble also features two or three dancers.



Hermes, the Sphinx and Oedipus, attic stamnos with red characters, ca 440 BC.

2 AKHENATEN

The son-mother-wife triad will be performed by a single actress in three monologues / roles. The different roles can be distinguished by the use of different costumes, crowns and, of course, character.

AKHENATEN, THE SON, is a genius: he writes poetry and philosophy, designs his own city, Akhetaten, and breaks with the traditional religion and proclaims Aten, depicted by the solar disk, as the one and only God -- the source of light and life. He is not involved in a single war, hates hunting and loves the arts. He maintains intense family relations with Tiye, Nefertiti and other women and their children. Under his reign, Egypt flourishes and prospers.

TIYE, THE MOTHER, received the title of Pharaoh after the death of her husband. She is a wise sovereign. Later she reigns as queen beside her son. She is a strong, intelligent woman, well aware how powerful and influential she is.

NEFERTITI, THE WIFE, gave birth to four or six children, among them probably the legendary Tutankhamun. Her full name, NEFERNEFERUATEN-NEFERTITI, means: "Beautiful is the Aten, beauty has arrived." Her youth, wisdom and intelligence are much admired, and Akhenaten is a loving father. Nevertheless, tensions might mount between her and Tiye and in the end she leaves the palace.

Again the SUN RA ARKESTRA performs as **THE CHOIR**, adding depth to the piece with their music and dance. There are evident parallels between Akhenaten and Sun Ra. Akhenaten, "son of the Aten," or "he who lives in truth," originates not from Amenhotep⁶ III but rather from the sun itself. Similarly, Sun Ra made it known that he was not fostered by earthly parents but instead came here from the planet Saturn. Ra is the name for the deity of the sun. In both his music and poetry, Sun Ra always showed a great affinity towards Egypt.



Nefertiti and Akhenaten

⁶

Greek for Amenophis III

SUMMARY – INTERPRETATION

King Oedipus can be seen as the Greek version of the story of Egyptian Pharaoh Akhenaten. It is at once similar to and yet much more brutal than the original – Oedipus is guilty of killing his father while Akhenaten attempts to rob his father of his immortality by erasing him from the historical record. One story tells of self-defense, homicide or accident, while the other is about intentional destruction of most cartouches in paintings and reliefs containing the name of his father, who never mentioned his son in his writings and claimed not to know him. Both Oedipus and Akhenaten were monarchs, both characters were intelligent, wise, peaceful, generous and loving, with a profound education in the arts, literature and music. At the end of his reign Akhenaten went blind while Oedipus stabbed his own eyes out.

THE STORY OF OEDIPUS tells of a brutal father who gave the order to pierce the feet of his son and to abandon him. He was probably just trying to cure his own fear of death by killing his own offspring. The fact that this attempt to kill Oedipus failed was only due to the compassion of the hired assassin who chose not to kill him.

This pattern of fathers being violent against their sons is very common in our civilization. Generations of fathers send out young men to fight wars and to die, turning them into brutal killers, physical cripples and psychic wrecks. Pregnant women often bow to pressure from young fathers who see their way of life and their own development at risk and insist on killing unwanted babies inside the womb. In Christianity we know of killing fathers such as Abraham, who almost killed his son, or Herod who ordered not just one but all of the infants killed at once. His reason for this, similarly, resided in his fear of losing his throne, his power and his life. The Christian God himself demanded the ultimate sacrifice from his son: to die on the cross. Their sons – and nowadays their daughters as well – are left to die. It seems the world is upside-down: it's the old who are supposed to die before the young, not the other way round. Violence in war-faring nations is aimed at their own children, which demonstrates the inability of parents to be peaceful and tolerant. War is one of the most devastating terrors known to humanity or nature, throwing the societies that perpetrate it back centuries in their development. It poisons the earth and the seas for thousands of years and it perpetuates violence as a means of solving problems even though it is entirely ineffectual and counterproductive.

The story of Oedipus also shows how acts of violence perpetuate violence from generation to generation, since every misdeed begets others. Like a boomerang, violence comes back to its origin and destroys Laios.

The role of Jokasta is remarkable: she becomes an accomplice by allowing her child to disappear. She does not oppose and, even worse, she accepts the absurd logic of her husband who, driven by sheer fear, sees the killing of his son as the only solution. It is a devastating position that destroys the essential female capacity to give and preserve life. Being involved in a homicide, even if it is only presumed and does not actually happen, ultimately leads to self-destruction.

THE STORY OF AKHENATEN seems subtler and takes place in a spiritual, magic world. His father is already dead, without Akhenaten being involved. But Akhenaten then erases the memory of his father and builds his own city and a new center for his reign. He also develops a new religion with a single God, represented by the solar disk which emits rays like protecting, warming and life-giving hands. Akhenaten leads no wars, nor does he hunt. To him life is a holy thing. He is an artist, a poet and he loves his women and his children. He is a peaceful man, living in a matriarchal world populated by strong women who participate in his reign: Tiye, Nefertiti, Kiya and others.

It seems evident that Akhenaten was an innovator, not a destroyer. He presided over a world of harmony, with his arms upraised toward the sun in a gesture of receiving – the symbol of life, the son of the sun.

In a sense, Akhenaten is an idealist, as he was the builder of a better world even if it collapsed again, with the old traditions and rituals resurging after his death. When the capital was moved back to Thebes, Akhenaten fell into ruins, wars broke out and the descendants contended for succession to the throne.

In these two pieces **THE ISSUE OF VIOLENCE AND NON-VIOLENCE** is outlined. There is a special focus on the role of women who act as accomplices to brutal fathers when, allowed to thrive in a matriarchal environment, they can instead fulfill their positive potential of propagating life.

Poschiavo, September 2011

The Great Hymn To The Aten - Akhenaten

Splendid You rise in the lightland of the sky,
O living Aten, creator of life !
You have dawned in the eastern lightland.
You fill every land with your beauty.

You are beautiful, mighty & radiant.
Risen high over every land,
your rays embrace the lands,
to the limit of all that You made.
Being Re, You reach their end.
You bend them for your beloved son.
Though You are far, your rays are on Earth.
Though seen by them, your course is unknown.

When You set in the western lightland,
Earth is in darkness, as if death.
The sleepers are in their chambers, heads covered,
no eye seeing the other.
One could steal their goods from under their heads,
they would not notice it.
Every lion comes from its den.
The serpents bite.
Darkness hovers, Earth is silent. For its creator rests in the lightland.

At dawn You have risen in the lightland.
To shine as the Aten of daytime !
You dispel the dark and cast your rays.
The Two Lands celebrate daily.
Awake they stand on their feet.
You have made them get up.
They wash and dress, their arms raised
in adoration to your appearance.
The entire land sets out to work.
All cattle are satisfied with their fodder.
The trees and the grass become green.
Birds fly from their nests, their wings praising your Ka.
All game animals frisk on their hooves, all that fly and flutter,
live when You dawn for them.
Ships fare downstream and back upstream,
roads lie open when You rise.
The fish in the river dart before You.
Your rays penetrate the Great Green deep.

O You, who make semen grow in women,
who creates people from sperm,
who feeds the son in his mother's womb,
who soothes him to still his tears.
You nurse in the womb !
Giver of breath to nourish all creatures.
When the child emerges from the womb
to breathe on the day of his birth,
You open wide his mouth to supply his needs.

The chick in the egg, chirping in the shell,
You give it breath within to sustain its life.
When it is complete, it breaks out from the egg.
It emerges from the egg, to say it is complete.
Walking on its legs when emerging.

How many are your deeds,
though hidden from sight.
O sole God without equal !
You made the Earth as You desired, You alone.
With people, cattle, and all creatures.
With everything upon Earth that walks on legs,
and all that is on high and flies with its wings.

The foreign lands of Syria and Nubia, and the land of Egypt,
You set everybody in his place and supply their needs.
They all have their food and their lifetimes are counted.
Tongues differ in speech, their characters as well.
Their skins are distinct, for You distinguished the peoples.

You made the Nile in the Netherworld.
You bring it up when You will,
to keep those of Egypt alive,
for You have created them for yourself.

Lord of All who toils for them.
Lord of All Lands who shines for them.
O Aten of daytime, great in glory !

All distant lands, You make them live.
You made a heavenly Nile descend for them.
With waves beating on the mountains like the sea,
to drench their fields and their towns.

How excellent are your ways, O Lord of Eternity!
The Nile from heaven for foreign peoples
and all land-creatures that walk on legs.
For Egypt the Nile from the Duat.

Your rays nurse all fields.
When You shine they live, they grow for You.
You made the seasons,
so that all that You made may come to life.
Winter cools them, and heat makes them sense You.

You created the sky far away in order to ascend to it,
to witness everything You created.
You are alone, shining in your form of the living Aten.
Risen, radiant, distant and near.
You made millions of forms from yourself alone :
cities, towns, fields, the river's course.
All eyes see You above them
as the Aten of the daytime on high.
When You are gone, (...) your eye is gone (...)
which You have made (?) {for their sake}

But even then You are in my heart
and there is no other who knows You,
only your son, *Nefer-kheperu-Re, Sole-one-of-Re*,
whom You have taught your ways and your might.

The ones on Earth come into being by your hand,
in the way You made them.
When You rise, they live.
When You set, they die.
You yourself are lifetime itself,
one lives through You.
All eyes rest on beauty until You set.
All labor ceases when You rest in the West.

When You rise, You make all arms firm for the King,
every leg is on the move since You founded the Earth,
You rouse them for your son, who emerged from your body.
The King who lives by Maat,
the Lord of the Two Lands :
Nefer-kheperu-Re, Sole-one-of-Re,
the Son of Re who lives by Maat,
the Lord of Crowns, *Akhenaten*, great in his lifetime.
And the great Queen whom he loves,
the Lady of the Two Lands :
Nefer-neferu-Aten Nefertiti,
who lives and is rejuvenated forever and ever.
(...)



The "Great Hymn To The Aten" in the tomb of Pharaoh Ay at Tel el-Amarna.
Rendering from N. de G. Davies, *The Rock Tombs of El Amarna VI*, 1908, pl. XXVII

SUN RA



TEXT FROM A 1989 PRESS KIT BY A&M RECORDS

Eclectic, outrageous, sometimes mystifying but always imbued with a powerful jazz consciousness, the music of Sun Ra has withstood its skeptics and detractors for nearly three generations. And well it should, since Sun Ra has been both apart of and ahead of the jazz tradition during that time. Like Duke Ellington and swing-era pioneer Fletcher Henderson, Sun Ra learned early on to write music in an arranged form that showcased the specific talents of his individual Arkestra members, and he has retained the services of some of these musicians to this day: John Gilmore, Marshall Allen, and Julian Priester for example since they first joined in the 1950's. Furthermore, Sun Ra was the first jazz musician to perform on electronic keyboards (1956) and the first to pursue full-scale collective improvisation in a big band setting, and his preoccupation with space travel as a compositional subject predated bands like Weather Report by about 15 years. All this from someone who refuses to even cite the earth as his home planet and prefers to have arrived from Saturn. As Sun Ra once explained it, "I never wanted to be a part of planet Earth, but I am compelled to be here, so anything I do for this planet is because the Master-Creator of the Universe is making me do it. I am of another dimension. I am on this planet because people need me".

Equally as mystifying is the fact that Sun Ra has no legal birth certificate. The Library of Congress claims that he arrived in Alabama, U.S.A., and his passport states that his legal name is Le Sony'r Ra, thus making all other names such as Sonny Lee, Sunni Blount, Armand Ra, and H. Sonne Blount merely pseudonyms.

In the 1940's Sun Ra became the house arranger for stage shows at the famous Chicago night spot, the Club DeLisa and played for the band led by Fletcher Henderson. Henderson was the arranger for the Benny Goodman Orchestra as well as his own and was a great inspiration to Ra, encouraging him to continue writing. In the early 50's, Ra's more radical compositions and arrangements found their way into his own groups which featured exotic costumes and unusual instruments.

By 1955 while in Chicago, Le Sony'r Ra had become "Le Sun Ra" or Sun Ra, leader of the Solar Arkestra which has also been known by many other names such as the Myth-Science Arkestra, the Solar Myth Arkestra, and the Omniverse Arkestra. In addition to saxophonists Gilmore and Allen, the band boasted a number of musicians who have contributed much to jazz, including bassist Richard Davis, trombonist Julian Priester, drummer Clifford Jarvis, and reedman James Spaulding. The Arkestra itself started as what was thought to be a hard-bop big band at the Grand Terrace and Birdland night clubs - a rare enough item - but soon was incorporating free improvisation. As such, it was a major influence on the emerging avant-garde

jazz musicians in Chicago, such as Muhal Richard Abrams, Henry Threadgill, and the Art Ensemble of Chicago.

From its inception, the Arkestra's music was infused with Sun Ra's unique philosophy, an unexpected hybrid of space-age science fiction and ancient Egyptian cosmo religious trappings. This philosophy gained a visual manifestation in the colorful robes, mock-metallic capes, and space headgear worn by the band (it's the only jazz orchestra that brings a tailor on tour), and in a stage presentation that usually features several dancers, a number of group chants ("We travel the spaceways/From planet to planet"), and at least one instance of the entire band juking its way, single-file, through the audience.

In 1960, Sun Ra moved his earthbound base of operations to New York, then in 1968 settled in Philadelphia. In both cities, as in Chicago, the band lived and worked as a sort of collective, with the hard-core nucleus sharing living quarters with the leader and assuming the role of cosmo-friends to the master. Throughout the 60's Sun Ra continued to record for his own deliberately poorly distributed Saturn Records label, and also on various European labels, while touring widely and continuing to spread the fame of his live performances. In recent years Sun Ra has steadily returned to the music of the near past - the standards and jazz classics he grew up with - although it is all filtered through his delightfully off center perspective.

In an interview with Jazziz magazine, Sun Ra recalled, "They really thought I was some kind of kook with all my talk about outer space and the planets. I'm still talking about it, but governments are spending billions of dollars to go to Venus, Mars, and other planets, so it's no longer kooky to talk about space". For Sun Ra, though, it has never been a matter of mere oddness. When he talks of his Saturnian origins, of observing the planets and traveling the spaceways, and of "going into space", it is really a lavishly elaborated metaphor, or so it seems to those who are not aware of the spiritual side of things. Sun Ra's music transcends earthbound limitations by riding the flights of imagination, and his message is that all of us are free to ride those flights with him if we have the precision and discipline to do so.

(from: <http://thesunraarkestra.com/>)

MARSHALL ALLEN



Marshall Belford Allen, alto saxophonist, multi-instrumentalist, composer, bandleader, and arranger, was born May 25, 1924 in Louisville, Kentucky and started clarinet lessons at age 10. At 18, he enlisted in the Army's 92nd Infantry (renowned as the Buffalo Soldiers), playing clarinet and alto saxophone in the 17th Division Special Service Band. Stationed in Paris during World War II, he played with pianist Art Simmons and saxophonist Don Byas, and he toured and recorded with James Moody during the late '40's. Upon honorable discharge, Mr. Allen enrolled in the Paris Conservatory of Music, studying clarinet with Delacluse. Returning to the States in 1951, Marshall settled in Chicago, where he led his own bands, playing in clubs and dance halls, while writing his own music and arrangements, as he continues to do today.

During the mid-'50's, Marshall met Sun Ra and became a student of his precepts. After joining the Sun Ra Arkestra in 1958, Marshall Allen led Sun Ra's formidable reed section for over 40 years (a role akin to the position of Johnny Hodges in the Duke Ellington orchestra). Marshall Allen lived, rehearsed, toured and recorded with Sun Ra almost exclusively for much of his musical career, leading the reed section during the time that the Sun Ra Arkestra won the "Downbeat" polls as number-one big band in 1988 and 1989. As a featured soloist with the Arkestra, Marshall pioneered the avant-garde jazz movement of the early '60's, expanding a style rooted in Johnny Hodges and Don Byas, and influencing all leading avant-garde saxophonists thereafter. During this time, Marshall also invented a woodwind instrument he called the "morrow," utilizing a saxophone mouthpiece attached to an open-hole wooden body. (This instrument is currently being marketed under another name, as Marshall never secured a patent on his invention).

Marshall Allen was one of the first jazz musicians to play traditional African music and what is now called "world music," working frequently with Olatunji and his Drums of Passion. In fact, Marshall is most likely the sole jazz musician who builds and plays the kora (a popular West African multi-stringed instrument), and he has been a major factor in its introduction to American audiences, as well as the world at large.

Marshall Allen is featured on over 200 Sun Ra releases, as well as appearing as special guest soloist in concert and on recordings with such diverse groups as NRBQ, Phish, Sonic Youth, Diggable Planets, Terry Adams, and Medeski, Martin & Wood.

Perhaps most significantly, Marshall Allen assumed the helm of the Sun Ra Arkestra in 1995 after the ascension of Sun Ra in 1993 and John Gilmore in 1995. Mr. Allen continues to reside at the Sun Ra Residence in Philadelphia, composing, writing and arranging for the Arkestra much like his mentor, totally committed to a life of discipline centered on the study, research, and further development of Sun Ra's musical precepts.

Marshall maintains the Sun Ra residence as a living museum dedicated to the compilation, restoration and preservation of Sun Ra's music, memorabilia, and artifacts. Marshall has launched the Sun Ra Arkestra into a dimension beyond that of mere "ghost" band by writing fresh arrangements of Sun Ra's music, as well as composing new music for the Arkestra. He works unceasingly to keep the big-band tradition alive, reworking arrangements of the music of Fletcher Henderson and Jimmie Lunceford for the Arkestra to play, along with many other American standards.

Marshall Allen is recognized all over the world as the premier avant-garde saxophonist, appearing in a solo concert in London in 1995, duet with Terry Adams in 1997 in Canada, and featured in articles in *JazzTimes* (12/02), *Signal to Noise Magazine* and innumerable other music magazines and radio and TV interviews. He is frequently called upon to give master classes, lectures, and demonstrations of Sun Ra's musical precepts, and he keeps himself accessible to all who have an interest in Sun Ra's legacy.

Marshall Allen plays the alto saxophone, flute, clarinet, oboe, kora, and E.V.I. (Electronic Valve Instrument).
(from: <http://thesunraarkestra.com/>)

KA – CORNELIA C. MÜLLER

Started in 1999 with some enthusiastic assistants, the UNCOOL Festival is the most extensive artistic work I've yet realized. On www.uncool.ch you'll get an insight into more than ten years of creative work. I am also involved in writing and photography, setting up installations, playing the piano and developing new projects. You can find more recent examples of my work at www.no-famine.ch. Ideas and concepts for the United Nations Year of Music (UNO) can be found under www.sharepeace.ch.

Just recently I opened a small venue for arts and music, called LO SPAZIO, at my home in Poschiavo. So far, several exhibitions (Michael Schütz - CH, Nelson Ladiciani - Cuba) and concerts (Marshall Allen, KA and DJ Fla) have taken place there.

At the UNCOOL Festival 2009, THE GORDIAN KNOT premiered in a revised version as a musical and artistic reading. The CD contains a rough mix of the concert with MARSHALL ALLEN, KA, BA, and AVREEAYL RA. It was recorded by the Radiotelevisione svizzera (Lugano).

For UNCOOL 2012 we are planning to stage the THEATRE PROJECT OEDIPUS-AKHENATEN, which focuses on violence and peacefulness from several different perspectives. It also picks up the ambivalent role of women in this context.

The next **UNCOOL music for cosmic life** will take place from June 18 to 24, 2012, in Poschiavo and surroundings. The premiere of *Oedipus-Akhenaten* is scheduled for June 22 and 23. We are looking for further venues within and outside Switzerland to host a performance of the pieces directly after the Festival.



KA – Cornelia Müller

photo, mask: Magdalena Kunz / background photo: Magdalena Kunz and Daniel Glaser, 2006